"A Sort of Bravery of the Mind and Soul"

THE SUPPOSED EDITORS OF *THE FEMALE SPECTATOR*
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"A Sort of Bravery of the Mind and Soul"

The books displayed in these cases are examples of some books written or influenced by women from earliest times to 1900. Unless otherwise indicated, they are from the collection of the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library or the John P. Robarts Research Library. This guide attempts to highlight some of the more interesting aspects of the lives of most of the women whose works are displayed.

"A Sort of Bravery of the Mind and Soul", the quotation used as the exhibition title, was said by Mary Astell (case 4) when describing what was involved for a woman who wanted to be educated as her brothers were, or have a book published under her own name.

Up to 1600

Cases 1 and 2

HYPATIA, A.D. 370-415

The daughter of the famous mathematician, Theon of Alexandria, Hypatia is the first recorded woman of science. As well as being recognized as an astronomer, mathematician, and physician, she was connected with the construction of the astrolobe and hydroscope. In her native city of Alexandria, she was the acknowledged head of the Neoplatonic school. She is known to have commented on the first 6 books of the Arithmetica of Diaphantes, of which now only a scribe's copy is extant, and the Conics of Apollonius, and to have prepared the astronomical canon of Ptolemy. A Christian mob murdered Hypatia for her philosophical beliefs.

The books on display include Ptolemy's Almagest (1538) and Fermat's Diaphantes (1670) as well as Suidas' encyclopedic account, one of the longest entries in the edition (1619).

PROBA, 4th CENT.

Proba, known variously as Valeria Falconia Proba or Proba Falconia, was a Latin poet living in the first half of the fourth century. Her only remaining work is a long poem, called Centones, in which she rearranged lines from Virgil to narrate stories from the Bible. This work is the first known work written by a woman ever to be printed. (Venice, 1472).

PISAN, CHRISTINE DE, ca. 1363 - ca. 1431

A contemporary of Dame Berners, Christine de Pisan was born in Venice but moved to the court of Charles V in France with her father. Her education was unusual for a woman of the Middle Ages and included Latin, philosophy, and various branches of science. After the deaths of her father and her husband she earned her living by writing verse and prose. The demand for her work by the nobles of France was so great that she had no difficulty supporting herself and her family. Of the 15 published volumes of ballads, history and political science, she is best known for a book on the art of war. In addition to the politics and literature of France, this famous widow championed the cause of women against the oppression and degradation imposed on them by men.

BERNERS, JULIANA, DAME, b. 1388?

Very little is really known about Dame Berners. She lived at the beginning of the 15th century and is said to have been Prioress of Sopwell Nunnery, a cell of the Benedictine Abbey of St. Alban. The boke of St. Albans and A treatyse of fysshynge wyth an angle, the first English books on sports

and fishing, are attributed to her. The latter book is particularly important in that its high estimation of the craft and the assigning of a meditative and gentle nature to the angler, set the tone for future writers on fishing, including Walton and Burton, who were acquainted with her works. The treatise was so popular that by 1600 it had gone through 11 editions. There has been considerable speculation as to how a nun could be so obviously proficient at angling and woodland sports. It's possible she learnt these skills at court before entering Sopwell, but, as well, she may have fished in the nearby River Ver, famous for its trout, to supply the nunnery for fasting days and have participated in field sports in the neighbourhood of Sopwell.

COLONNA, VITTORIA, MARCHESA DI PESCARA, 1490-1547

After the death of her husband in 1525, Vittoria Colonna was forbidden by Pope Clement VII to take the veil (document shown in case). She lived a semi-monastic life in convents thereafter, travelling around frequently to hear the famous preachers. Although she wrote several volumes of spiritual poems and sonnets in the Petrarchan style for which she was much admired in her day, she is best remembered as a moderate church reformer of the Renaissance. She was so vitally interested in current religious problems, such as the right of the Capuchins to exist independently, that she was warned by her friend Cardinal Pole to stay within the limits suitable to her sex and not to read too widely. Because of her high station in life and her natural intelligence, however, she was very influential with the popes and intervened successfully many times on behalf of the threatened Capuchins, becoming that order's chief protector. Her circle of friends included Michelangelo who called her "uno grande amico". She was, in fact, the only feminine light in his life.

1600 - 1700

Cases 3 and 4

MARINELLI, LUCREZIA, 1571-1653

In the past, the creative abilities of women were often able only to be released in widowhood. Marinelli, a very cultured Venetian, was widowed at a young age and until her death at age 82, wrote several works in prose and verse which were well received. Shown in the case are a volume of poetry written in octaves and the earliest significant European book of the 17th century dealing with the intellectual emancipation of women.

LINCOLN, ELIZABETH (KNEVITT) CLINTON, COUNTESS OF

This book is an early example of women writing on practical subjects. The Countess was the mother of 9 daughters and 7 sons, and her treatise, outlining the advantages and necessity of mothers nursing their own children, was written particularly for her daughter-in-law Bridget.

MARIE DE L'INCARNATION, MOTHER, 1599-1672

Born in Tours, France, Marie de l'Incarnation was the first superior of the Ursuline convent at Quebec. Her maiden name was Guyard, and at 17, she married Claude Martin. After her husband's death in 1619, she devoted herself to the education of her infant son, Claude, until 1632 when she entered the Ursuline convent at Tours. In 1639, she came to Quebec to help found an Ursuline convent, and was its superior until her death in 1672. She was beatified in 1877.

La Vie de la venerable mère Marie de l'Incarnation is based in part on letters she wrote to her son, Claude Martin, which he collected after her death and had published in 1681.

BEHN, APHRA (AMIS), 1640-1689

Aphra Behn, the first female writer to have lived by her pen, was born at Wye, Kent. Taken to Surinam as a child while it was still an English possession, she returned to England in 1658 after Surinam became Dutch. Her childhood experience there inspired her novel Oroonoko, from which Thomas Southern later adapted a popular tragedy.

Mrs. Behn married a London merchant of Dutch extraction and shortly thereafter gained access to the English Court. During the Dutch war with England, Charles II sent her as a spy to Antwerp, where, from an indiscretion of one of her suitors, she learned of De Witt's intention to send a Dutch fleet up the Thames to burn the British fleet. The event proved true, although her information was ignored.

Widowed early and left without money, and with little recompense from the Court for her assistance in Antwerp, she was forced to turn to writing for a living. In order to get published, she attempted to write in the style of a man. She is best remembered for her unconventional life style, her knowledge of the theatre, and her ingenuity, wit and vivacity.

CUNITZ, MARIA, 1610-1664

Born in Silesia and the daughter of a doctor, Maria Cunitz or Cunitia became a very learned woman. In her youth she learnt many ancient and modern languages, history, mathematics and medicine, but she became most famous for her knowledge of astronomy. The Thirty Years War forced her and her husband, Dr. Elias von Löven, to Poland where they took refuge in a convent. Here she composed the astronomical tables for which she gained a European reputation.

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NEWCASTLE, MARGARET (LUCAS) CAVENDISH, DUCHESS OF, 1624?-1674

Known as "Mad Madge of Newcastle", Margaret Cavendish is a wonderful example from the past of female nonconformity. Not only was she famous for her eccentric dress and manners, her wealth and beauty, but also for being the most learned lady of the Restoration period, though some critics claimed "no lady could understand so many hard words". Although the plays she wrote are allegorical dialogues without plot and her scientific books are inaccurate, she can be recognized for her ingenuity and imagination

CELLIER, ELIZABETH, fl. 1680

A noted midwife in London, Elizabeth Cellier has become known as the "Popish Midwife" because of her connection with the Meal Tub Plot. After being acquitted of high treason, she published a pamphlet vindicating herself, called "Malice Defeated", but because of some of her statements she was later fined £1000 and sentenced to 3 sessions in the pillory. In 1687, she published another pamphlet in which she advocated founding a "Colledg of Midwives" where the best possible training could be given. The suggestion came to nothing.

ASTELL, MARY, 1668-1731

Mary Astell was born at Newcastle-upon-Tyne and educated by her uncle in French, Latin, natural philosophy, logic and mathematics. In 1694, she published anonymously A Serious Proposal to the Ladies for the Advancement of their true and greatest virtue, By a Lover of her Sex in which she outlined a scheme to establish an intellectual, academic and religious community for women who wished to remain single, had become widowed, or had refused unsuitable marriages. A great lady, now thought to be Queen Anne, is supposed to have offered £10,000 as a beginning, but the scheme was stopped short by Gilbert Burnet, Bishop of Salisbury (1643-1715) who thought the idea smacked of Rome and the revival of the nunneries. In fact, her plan was so badly misrepresented to the public that she was personally slandered in several issues of the Tatler, apparently by Swift and Addison.

Mrs. Astell is now considered to be a pioneer in education. She stated her argument clearly that the inferior position of women to men was not due to nature but to education. During a controversy with Dean Atterbury over criticisms she made of his work (1706), he is reported to have taken "them to be of an extraordinary nature, considering they [came] from the pen of a woman ... had she as much good breeding as good sense, she would be perfect. She attacks me very home".

Mrs. Astell enjoyed a long correspondence with John Norris on one of the pivotal doctrines of Platonism, the pure love of God. Letters concerning the love of God, the collected correspondence between Mary Astell and John Norris, is open at a letter she wrote to him.

CONWAY, ANNE (FINCH) CONWAY, VISCOUNTESS, 1631-1679

A theosophist and mystic, Anne Conway was one of the most distinguished converts to Quakerism. Her primary interests lay in the most obtruse treatises on theosophy and mysticism and she corresponded regularly with Dr. Henry More and other Platonists on theological subjects. She had only one work published. In 1690, a collection of philosophical treatises in Latin were published in Amsterdam, the first being a translation of a work by a certain English countess "learned beyond her sex." Leibnitz ascribes the authorship to the Countess of Conway. The work was translated into English in 1692.

1700 - 1800

Cases 5 and 6

ELSTOB, ELIZABETH, 1683-1756

Born in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Elizabeth Elstob was educated by her mother, who admired learning, especially in her own sex. At the age of 8, after her mother's death, Mrs. Elstob's uncle and guardian stopped these lessons, thinking one "tongue was enough for a woman". However, she was permitted to take up French, and when she later joined her brother William at Oxford, he encouraged her to learn 8 more languages, including Latin.

In 1709, An English Saxon homily of the birth-day of St. Gregory was published by subscription. Her Rudiments of Grammar for the English Saxon Tongue appeared in 1715. Caroline, Princess of Wales, also lent money for a proposed publication of Aelfric's homilies, which were prepared but never published.

With her brother's death in 1715, Mrs. Elstob became destitute, and disappeared for some years for fear of being sent to a debtor's prison. For 24 years, she was unable to continue her scholarly studies and she suffered hardship, penury and intellectual starvation until 1739 when she was engaged as a governess to the children of Margaret, Duchess of Portland. Her scholarly activity never reached such heights again, and she remained with the Portland family until her death.

DACIER, ANNE LEFEVREC, 1654-1720

Anne Dacier, a French scholar and classical translator, was born at Saumur and educated by her father after he discovered how much she had learned by listening, hidden, to her brother's lessons. Around 1672, she published an edition of Callimachus that was so well received she was asked to be one of the editors of the Delphin series of classical authors.

Her position today as one of the unsurpassed translators and literary scholars of her time is based on her French translations of the Iliad (1699) and the Odyssey (1708) which introduced Homer for the first time to many French men of letters.

MONTAGU, (LADY) MARY (PIERREPONT) WORTLEY, 1689-1762

As a child, Lady Mary had suffered from small-pox, but fortunately the only permanent disfigurement caused by the disease was the loss of her eyelashes. When she accompanied her husband to Turkey in 1716 where he was the British ambassador at Constantinople, she observed Turkish women innoculating women and children against small-pox. She had her son innoculated, and brought the idea back to England. At this time (i.e. 1720) variolation, as it was called, was done by scratching the skin and placing a small amount of fluid from a human pistule onto the wound. The idea became wide-spread, particularly after Caroline, Princess of Wales, permitted her two daughters to be innoculated. She had first persuaded George I to release six prisoners condemned to hang if they would volunteer to try the experiment before the Princesses. The six men survived, and variolation became acceptable.

The operation, however, was very dangerous as the fluid used was taken from persons with the disease and was still virulent. In 1796, Edward Jenner (1749-1823) developed a safer vaccine (from vacca = cow) using more controlled amounts taken from the pistules of cow-pox, a less harmful but equally effective preventative of small-pox in humans. In time, variolation became replaced by vaccine innoculation or as it is now known, vaccination.

CARTER, ELIZABETH, 1717-1806

Samuel Johnson once observed, "A man is in general better pleased when he has a good dinner on his table than when his wife talks Greek", but of Mrs. Carter, he remarked, "My old friend, Mrs. Carter, could make a pudding as well as translate Epictetus from the Greek, and work a handkerchief as well as compose a poem".

Elizabeth Carter was born in Deal, Kent and educated by her father. At first, he found her slow, but through personal diligence, she was able to overcome "her natural incapacity for learning", and became proficient in 9 languages, including Hebrew and Arabic, as well as astronomy, and ancient history and geography.

Her poems appeared in 1738 and 1762. From 1734 she contributed to the Gentleman's Magazine under the name of ELIZA, and published translations from French and Italian. She is most celebrated for the solidity of her learning rather than any brilliant intellectual qualities. Hers is the first English translation of Epictetus.

DU CHATELET-LOMONT, GABRIELLE EMELIE (LE TONNELIER DE BRETEUIL) marquise, 1706-1749

Born in Paris and raised among the French aristocracy of Louis XIV, Mme du Châtelet was an eager student from an early age, her favourite studies being in linguistics, music, mathematics and metaphysics. In 1725 she was married, but within a short time, by mutual agreement, she and her husband were separated. It is after this separation that she became acquainted with Voltaire, who took refuge with her upon returning from his exile in England. Voltaire can scarcely be spoken of without also speaking of Mme du Châtelet, for their intimacy lasted from 1733 until her death in 1749.

Displayed in the case is the first edition of Newton's Principia (1687) which Mme du Châtelet translated from the Latin into French for her own use. The translation was published after her death, and it contributed greatly to the influence of Newton on the continent. Also displayed is a 1772 edition of Voltaire's Elémens de philosophie de Newton, a long treatise on the Newton system which he and Mme du Châtelet wrote together while he was staying with her at her château at Cirey.

BROOK, FRANCES (MOORE) 1724-1789

Another female friend of Samuel Johnson, Mrs. Brook first appeared in print in 1775 as an essayist under the pseudonym of Mary Singleton. For 37 weeks, she published a weekly periodical in the style of the Spectator called The Old Maid. All the issues were reprinted together in one volume in 1764.

Mrs. Brook's husband was the garrison chaplain at Quebec from 1760-1768, and after joining him there, she published what might be considered the first Canadian novel, The History of Julia Mandeville, a story with a Canadian setting. After her return to England in 1768, she published The History of Emily Montague, another novel set in Canada and dedicated to Guy Carleton who was Governor of Quebec at that time.

MONTAGU , ELIZABETH (ROBINSON) 1720-1800

Sometimes called the Queen of the Blue-stockings, Elizabeth Montagu was a cousin by marriage to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. For nearly 50 years, she held undisputed supremacy as the hostess of intellectual London, and it was to her assemblies that the now accepted epithet "blue-stocking" was apparently applied for the first time. With her literary breakfasts and evening conversation parties, she tried to make her London home the central point of union for all the "intellect and fashion of the metropolis", and in so doing, she became known throughout Europe as the "Madame du Deffand of the English capital".

NIHELL, ELIZABETH

Delivering babies had been a purely feminine function until the 18th century when man-midwives began to take over the profession. Mrs. Nihell, a long-time Haymarket midwife argued against all male practitioners and particularly William Smellie, whom she called "a great horse godmother of a he-midwife". She claimed that they used cruel instruments and as well that they were incompetent and rough. Her book was first published as a Treatise on the art of midwifery in London, 1760.

PIOZZI, HESTER LYNCH (SALUSBURY) THRALE, 1741-1821

Educated and skilled in Greek, Latin, Hebrew, modern languages, and horseriding, Mrs. Thrale (better known by her first husband's name) was part of Samuel Johnson's literary circle and contributed her wit, intelligence and tolerance for his peculiarities. She wrote several books and published correspondence between her and Johnson.

POWELL, ANN, d. 1792

Ann Powell, a sister of William Drummond Powell (1755-1834) a chief justice of Upper Canada, accompanied her brother on his journey to become the 1st judge in the British territory west of Montreal (Upper Canada) at Detroit which remained British until the Jay Treaty of 1796.

Miss Powell describes in her Journal her meeting with Joseph Brant, principle chief of the Six Nations Indians, shortly after their move from Ohio to British North America.

MACAULAY, CATHERINE (SAWBRIDGE) 1731-1791

A respected historian, Catherine Macaulay was born at Wye, Kent and educated privately. Early in her life, she displayed an intense enthusiasm for the study of "liberty". Her most famous work, The history of England from the accession of James I to that of the Brunswick line, appeared in 5 volumes, and was later translated into French. Described as the "most sensible, unaffected and best history of England we had yet", it also brought to Mrs. Macaulay a great deal of attention and money.

Although she was considered an astute, clear thinker, her private life interfered with her general recognition by society. After her first husband's death, she married a man much younger than herself, thereby losing many friends and inviting excessive criticism of her works. She published a great deal during her life, mostly on historical subjects, but as Mary Wollstonecraft remarked after her death, not "sufficient respect [was] paid to her memory".

WOLLSTONECRAFT, MARY, 1759-1797

Mary Wollstonecraft and her 2 sisters left their father's intolerable home in 1780 after the death of their mother and sought to earn their own livelihood. For most of her life, Mary, the eldest sister, supported herself and often her sisters and others as a governess, school principal, literary advisor to John Johnson, the London publisher, and as a writer. She went to France to witness the Revolution, in 1792, the year in which A vindication of the rights of woman was published. The main argument of this early feminist book is a plea for the equality of education for both sexes. She asserted that intellectual companionship is the chief happiness of marriage. She died in 1797 at the birth of her daughter Mary, afterwards the author of Frankenstein and wife of Shelley.

1800 - 1900

Cases 7 and 8

TRIMMER, SARAH KIRBY, 1741-1800

After a "quiet domestic life" (according to the D.N.B.), educating her 6 daughters and 6 sons in Brentford, Sarah Trimmer became a leader in developing Sunday schools and education for the poor. Until 1780 there were scarcely any schools for poor people. When Queen Charlotte wanted to set up Sunday schools at Windsor, she interviewed Mrs. Trimmer and the result of this meeting in 1786 was the publication of the first edition of The oeconomy of charity, a book dealing with the promotion and management of Sunday schools. In 1787 she set up a school of industry at Brentford. The Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge kept 2 of her books on its list for 77 years. She is also known as being the first to teach young children from pictures.

MORE, HANNAH, 1745-1833

Born in Stapleton, Gloustershire, and educated by her parents so that she might be able to earn her own living, Miss More's reputation rests on three things: as a clever verse writer and witty talker in the circle of Johnson, Garrick and Reynolds; as a moral and religious writer in the Puritanical style; and as a philanthropist. She was one of the last of the group of learned ladies to have known Johnson, and he said of her famous poem that there was "no name in poetry that might not be glad to own her Bas Bleu".

With her sisters, she published a series of cheap tracts (a tale, a ballad, and a tract for Sunday reading) over a period of three years for

teaching the poor the value of humility, industry and sobriety. Each was sold for a penny, and with the help of committees formed through Britain, and in America, 2 million were apparently sold in the first year alone.

ARBLAY, FRANCES (BURNEY) D', 1752-1840

A daughter of the fashionable music master, Charles Burney, Fanny Burney was born at King's Lynn, Norfolk. She was left to her own devices, particularly after her mother's death, and thus was largely self-educated. From the age of 15, due to her father's London position, she lived in the midst of a brilliant social circle, which in effect amounted to her only formal schooling. In 1788, at the age of 25, she published anonymously her first novel "Evelina", based on short stories she had written in early adolescence, and heard it praised around her by those who were unaware of its author. When this was revealed, Fanny found herself included among Mrs. Thrale's Streatham group where she met, among others, Samuel Johnson, who called her "little Burney". She published less successfully her second novel, "Camilla", in 1882.

In 1783, after Mrs. Thrale's marriage and Johnson's death, the Streatham circle was broken. For awhile, Fanny became attached to the household of the Queen, and she married in 1791. Until her death, she published occasionally but rarely successfully. Her Diaries and letters were published posthumously.

STAËL-HOLSTEIN, ANNE LOUISE GERMAIN (NECKER) BARONNE DE, 1766-1817

The daughter of a famous financier father and a mother who was the leader of one of the most popular Parisian salons, Madame de Staël was herself "exalted to the skies by the men of her time". Her place in history is assured more by her social importance - the significance of her post-revolutionary salons - than by the importance of her writing. Lettres sur les ouvrages et le caractere de J.J. Rousseau, the book displayed, was the first work she published under her own name, although two works had earlier been published anonymously. In her day, she was considered talented, but without critical ability.

GERMAIN, SOPHIE, 1776-1831

Sophie Germain, born at Paris, became interested in science as a child through a story she was told of Archimedes. That great mathematician, completely involved in his studies, had been unaware of the arrival of the Romans at Syracuse and had been murdered by them. So impressed was she by his absorption in his subject that she resolved to study that science. But she faced severe parental hostility, to the extent that fire and light were removed from her room to prevent secret study at night. But in time, her father yielded, and she commenced her studies in earnest. Her early works were published under the pseudonym "Le Blanc, polytechnician".

In 1808, Napoleon offered a prize for the most interesting answer to a question on the vibration of elastic surfaces. Mlle Germain alone submitted a response, but she did not receive her prize until 1816.

The pamphlet on display, Memoria di Guglielmo Libri sopra la teoria dei numerie was presented to Mlle Germain by the author and is opened at her holograph notes on his work.

SHELLEY, MARY WOLLSTONECRAFT (GODWIN) 1797-1851

Daughter of feminist Mary Wollstonecraft, Mary Shelley is the author of Frankenstein. It is surprising that such a masterpiece of horror was written before she was 20 years old. The cultural significance of Frankenstein, with its concept of a scientist's power to create human life and all the subsequent problems of this power, has been immense. In addition to her other romances, which include Valperga, Mary Shelley edited and published the works of her husband, Percy Bysshe Shelley, after his death.

MARCET, JANE (HALDIMAND) 1769-1858

Jane Marcet, the daughter of a Swiss merchant, wrote familiarly on scientific subjects at a time when simple scientific books were almost unknown. Her best known work, Conversations on Political Economy (1816), was frequently reprinted, and in its day, considered the best introduction to that science. The French economist, Jean-Baptiste Say, praised Mrs. Marcet as "The only woman who had written on political economy and shown herself superior to men".

The work displayed, Conversations on Natural Philosopy, was presented to Henry Scadding in 1832 as a Mathematics Prize from Upper Canada College, Toronto.

JAMESON, ANNA BROWNELL (MURPHY) 1794-1860

The marriage of Anna Jameson, who was born in Dublin and died at Ealing, Middlesex, proved to be unhappy. She lived with her husband only a few years including a stay of a year or more in Canada, which resulted in Winter studies and summer rambles in Canada. Her many books, such as Diary of an ennuyée and Celebrated female sovereigns, were popular, which was just as well since her husband made no provision for her in his will.

SOMERVILLE, MARY (FAIRFAX) 1780-1872

In spite of a desultory education, this remarkable woman learnt algebra and Euclid in secret after she left school, and went on to become famous as a writer on science and as the centre of a group of eminent scientists which

included Sir William and Sir John Herschel, Sir Charles Lyell, and Sir George Airy. As well, she knew Humboldt, Arago, Laplace, Gay-Lussac and De Candolle. In 1826 she presented a paper to the Royal Society and until 1869 when her last work, a summary of the most recent discoveries in chemistry and physics, was published (shown in the case), she wrote many books on the physical sciences. Among the many distinctions awarded her, was a bust commissioned by the Royal Society and a pension of £300 a year granted her by the government.

CLERKE, AGNES MARY, 1842-1907

Born at Skibbereen, Co. Cork, Agnes Clerke was highly educated at home. Her interest in astronomy was encouraged by her father, himself an amateur astronomer. The first of her many articles and books on both astronomical and literary themes appeared in the Edinburgh Review in April 1877. In 1892, the governors of the Royal Institute awarded Miss Clerke the Actonian prize of 100. She was elected an honorary member of the Royal Astronomical Society in 1903, a rare distinction for a woman. This honour had previously been accorded only to Mrs. Somerville, Caroline Herschel and Ann Sheepshanks.